

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EA-06 AID-05 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00

OMB-01 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 STR-04 /074 W

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R 162115Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8407

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR VE

SUBJ: REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS

REF: STATE 086289

1. PRESIDENT FORD'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS TO CONGRESS APRIL 10 WAS THE LEAD STORY IN ALL CARACAS PAPERS MORNING OF APRIL 11. LOCAL PAPERS SEPARATED THE STORY INTO VIETNAM COMPONENT AND THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST TO CONGRESS FOR ELIMINATION OF THE ANTI-OPEC FEATURE OF THE TRA AS IT APPLIES TO VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR, WHICH IS OF GREAT LOCAL INTEREST. LEADING DAILIES EL NACIONAL AND EL UNIVERSAL GAVE SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE TRA REQUEST.

2. PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS PUBLISHED IN FULL IN 2 PARTS IN EL UNIVERSAL APRIL 13-14 FROM USIS-SUPPLIED TEXT, WHICH WAS LASO SENT TO TOP OFFICIALS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, MIRAFLORES PALACE AND TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEES IN THE SENATE AND THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, AS WELL AS TO LEADING LOCAL COLUMNISTS AND COMMENTATORS.

3. THERE HAS BEEN AS YET NO OFFICIAL REACTION TO THE SPEECH AS A WHOLE, ALTHOUGH IN A PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 11 FOREIGN MINISTER RAMON ESCOVAR SALOM EXPRESSED PLEASURE OVER THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR ELIMINATION OF THE RESTRICTIONS WHICH THE TRA IMPOSED UPON

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GRANTING GENERALIZED PREFERENCES TO VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR.

(ESCOVAR AT THE SAME TIME DENIED THAT LIFTING THESE RESTRICTIONS AGAINST VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR WOULD DISTURB THE UNITY AND SOLIDARITY OF OPEC.) ESCOVAR ALSO EXPRESSED THE HOPE AT THIS PRESS CONFERENCE THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO FIND A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION TO THE GRAVE SITUATION IN SOUTHEAT ASIA (SEE CARACAS 3955).

4. NO EDITORIAL REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH HAS YET APPEARED. LOCAL MEDIA CONTINUE TO GIVE SOUTHEAST ASIA SITUATION FAIRLY EXTENSIVE PLAY. THE ONLY COLUMNIST TO COMMENT ON THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS AD DEPUTY AND INTERNATIONALIST LUIS ESTEBAN REY, WHO WROTE IN EL UNIVERSAL APRIL 13 THAT IN HIS SPEECH THE PRESIDENT "THREW A BONE" TO LATIN AMERICA WHILE CONCERNING HIMSELF PRIMARILY WITH INDOCHINA. REY CREDITED THE U.S. WITH CONSIDERABLE SACRIFICES IN VIETNAM, BUT WARNED THAT THE U.S. SHOULD PREPARE FOR THE WORST IN INDOCHINA AND CORRECTLY EVALUATE ITS OBLIGATIONS IN TERMS OF ITS VITAL INTERESTS ELSEWHERE.

5. COMMENT: VENEZUELAN INTEREST IN THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH OBVIOUSLY CENTERED IN HIS REQUEST TO CONGRESS ABOUT AMENDING THE TRA TO BENEFIT VENEZUELA, AND REACTION AS TO THAT FEATURE HAS BEEN QUITE POSITIVE. VENEZUELAN ATTITUDE TO EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IS LARGELY PASSIVE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE NET IMPACT HERE OF THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS PROBABLY TO REINFORCE LOCAL AWARENESS OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE IMMENSE INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE U.S. WE DOUBT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WILL SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE ATMOSPHERE AND AGENDA FOR THE SECRETARY'S VISIT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, SPEECHES, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975CARACA04068
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750133-1124
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750443/aaaabntm.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 086289
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 SEP 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <23 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS
TAGS: PFOR, VE, US, (FORD, GERALD R)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006